



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



VETERANS TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNITY LIVING INITIATIVE

In the summer of 2011, the United States Department of Transportation joined with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, Defense, and Health and Human Services to establish the Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative (VTCLI), an initiative that is designed to improve transportation options and mobility for America's veterans, service members, and their families.

Veterans and military families are a traditionally under-served population when it comes to transportation access, so they're an important focal point. However, the VTCLI grant program is structured to fund projects that will potentially benefit anyone living within the jurisdiction of a grant recipient, with or without veteran status. In particular, the initiative aligns with the Administration's implementation of the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision, which addresses the rights of people with disabilities to live independently. It also reflects the President's commitment to assist economically disadvantaged workers and people who need access to health care.

The first round of VTCLI grants were announced in November 2011. On February 7, 2012, the Federal Transit Administration announced the availability of an additional \$30 million for the VTCLI grant program.

Questions regarding the grants should be forwarded directly to: VeteransTransportation@DOT.gov.

The link for further information on the initiative and applying for the grant is at: <http://www.fta.dot.gov/>

Access to reliable and affordable transportation is an essential ingredient to empower today's service members, veterans, and their families to participate fully and successfully in their communities and achieve economic stability.

-Ray LaHood, Secretary of Transportation

Inside this issue:

Avenue of Flags Fundraiser	2
VA Comment Deadline Extended	3
Chamberlain Veterans Memorial	3
VA Creative Arts Festival	4
Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service	5
Women's History Month	5
CVSO Congressional Forum	6
Upcoming Events	6

FUNDRAISER FOR AVENUE OF FLAGS

*Help Maintain
"The Veterans Avenue of Flags"
at The South Dakota National Cemeteries*



*Silent Auction Fundraiser
and Wine & Cheese Tasting*

*March 27th, 2012
5pm to 7:30 pm
at the Elks Lodge
3333 Jolly Lane
Rapid City, SD*

*Sponsored by
the South Dakota Veterans Cemeteries Support*

Printing donated by A&B Business Solutions

VA EXTENDS DEADLINE FOR FEEDBACK

Veterans, community members and leaders have answered the call to provide feedback to the proposals for the improvement of Veteran's health care services in portions of South Dakota, Nebraska and Wyoming.

In response to requests for additional time to provide feedback regarding the proposals, the Department of Veterans Affairs has extended the period for input to April 30, 2012. After that date, VA Black Hills will submit gathered comments, recommendations and counter-proposals to VA Central Office for review. VA Black Hills will continue to welcome and consider input received after April 30th.

Steve DiStasio, Director, VA Black Hills commented, "We are very pleased with the interest and feedback received from Veterans and community members in response to the proposals."

For further information regarding the proposals, please visit: www.blackhills.va.gov/VABlackHillsFuture/.



VETERANS MEMORIAL BECOMING REALITY AT CHAMBERLAIN

A veterans memorial will soon become a reality along Interstate 90 on the edge of Chamberlain. The memorial will sit just to the north of the South Dakota Hall of Fame, which is located within an interstate interchange off I-90's Exit 263.

Tom Davis, a member of the Tri-County Veterans Committee, said phase one of a three-phase plan is set to begin this spring.

Each branch of the service will have its own granite monument. Granite coming from South Dakota. The reserve branches will be combined onto one monument and a larger center stone will bear an eagle, quotes and other military markings.

The committee is still raising money for phase one, which will include groundbreaking, materials and landscaping, and cost \$130,000. It is selling "pavers" that individuals or groups can have engraved with the name of any South Dakota military member.

The first phase is set to be completed by the end of 2012, he said. The second two phases will be completed as money comes in. For updates on the status of this project, you can visit their website at: www.tricountyveterans.org.

TRI-COUNTY

VETERAN'S PARK

Brule/Buffalo/Lyman Counties
P.O. Box 132 Chamberlain, SD 57325



NATIONAL VETERANS CREATIVE ARTS FESTIVAL

More than 3,000 veterans across the country have begun entering local competitions for the 2012 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, scheduled for Oct. 8-14 in Boston. The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival provides an artistic avenue for the physical, mental and emotional healing of our Nation's heroes."

The competition, presented by the VA, the American Legion Auxiliary and Help Hospitalized Veterans, includes 53 categories in the visual arts division that range from oil painting to leatherwork to paint-by-number kits. In addition, there are 120 categories in the performing arts pertaining to all aspects of music, dance, drama and creative writing.

The competition is open to veterans enrolled at a VA medical center, outpatient clinic, or who reside in a state veterans home. An eligible veteran may compete at only one VA facility per year. Veterans may submit an entry in creative writing, dance, drama or music categories with a veteran or group from another VA facility, but still must officially enter through their home VA facility.

Veterans submitting an entry must work with a staff person from the VA facility where they are enrolled. All required forms must be completed and postmarked to the National Chairperson no later than April 1 in order for veterans to be eligible to compete at the national level. Specific division information, rules, and category descriptions are available in the 2012 competition handbook available on the Festival website at www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov or through local VA recreation therapy or voluntary service offices.

The national judging process occurs during the months of April, May and June. Selected medal-winning veterans from the national competition will be invited to participate in the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Those receiving an invitation to the Festival will be notified via the VA staff contact person by June 20, 2012.

This year, the VA Boston Healthcare System hosts the event which will feature an art exhibit of all the first-place art entries from the national competition on display at the Quincy Marriott Hotel on Tuesday, Oct. 9. The program will culminate on Sunday afternoon, Oct. 14, with a gala stage show performance at the Cutler Majestic Theatre in downtown Boston.



National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

You can view the 2011 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival Gallery at <http://www.va.gov/opa/speceven/caf/2011/webgallery/index.asp>

UNACCOMPANIED VETERANS MEMORIAL SERVICE



BLACK HILLS NATIONAL CEMETERY UNACCOMPANIED VETERANS MEMORIAL SERVICE

APRIL 2, 2012 9:00 AM

**JOIN US FOR A MILITARY COMMITMENT FOR VETERANS INTERRED WITHOUT HONORS BETWEEN
JANUARY AND MARCH 2012**

HONORS TO BE PROVIDED BY: STURGIS HONOR GUARD

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs joins the Nation in observing Women's History Month in March by honoring women veterans for their significant historical contributions and encouraging them to take advantage of the benefits they've earned.

Women serve in every branch of the military, representing 15 percent of today's active duty military and nearly 18 percent of National Guard and Reserve forces nationwide. They serve as gunners, police, pilots, truck drivers and fuel suppliers. By 2020, the VA estimates women veterans will constitute 10 percent of the veteran population.

The VA recently launched a "Stories of Service" video series depicting the role of women in the military, available at www.womenshealth.va.gov. In these three-to-five-minute video vignettes, women veterans spanning various eras and service branches talk about their experiences in the military. For answers to frequently asked questions, visit

<http://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/faqs.asp>

For posters to promote the observance, visit

<http://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/womenshistory.asp>

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

CVSOS MEET WITH SENATOR JOHNSON

County Veterans Service Officers met with Senator Tim Johnson and his staff on Monday, February 20.

These forums provide a venue for the VSOs to share concerns with federal programs and benefits impacting South Dakota's veterans.



Upcoming Events

- Mar. 19—VABHHCS Veterans Creative Arts Show—Hot Springs
- Apr. 2—Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial—VA Black Hills Cemetery
- Apr. 27-29—VABHHCS Women's Retreat—Fort Meade
- Apr. 28—Military Order of the Purple Heart State Convention—Rapid City
- May 11-13—DAV 73rd Annual Department of SD Convention—Brookings
- May 12—60th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Display—Brookings
- May 16—Vietnam Veterans of America State Convention—Pierre
- May 21-22—South Dakota Veterans Commission Meeting—Pierre
- Jun. 7-10—VFW State Convention—Brookings
- Jun. 14-17—American Legion State Convention—Watertown
- Aug. 27-29—VSO Annual Benefits School—Pierre

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
South Dakota Department of the Military
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Soldiers and Sailors Building
425 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us
Web site: <http://mva.sd.gov>

